

Message Text

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TAGS: MARR, JA

SUBJECT: JAPANESE REACTION TO MIG 25 DEFECTOR

SUMMARY: DEFECTION OF SOVIET PILOT BELENKO IS THE FIRST STORY IN MONTHS TO DISPLACE LOCKHEED AFFAIR AND DOMESTIC POLITICAL STRUGGLE ON JAPAN'S FRONT PAGES. MEDIA HIGHLIGHTED INADEQUACY OF JAPAN'S AIR DEFENSE SYSTEM EVEN TO TRACK COURSE OF INCOMING MIG 25 AT LOW ALTITUDES, AND ENVISAGED DELICATE DIPLOMATIC SITUATION FOR JAPAN AS RESULT OF DEFECTION. ATTITUDES OF GOJ MINISTRIES, MOSCOW, WASHINGTON, AND EVEN NATO COUNTRIES ARE BEING SCRUTINIZED WITH CARE. MEDIA SHOWS INCREASING APPRECIATION OF INTELLIGENCE VALUE OF PLANE BUT EDITORIALS ASK THE GOJ TO SETTLE CASE IN ACCORDANCE WITH ESTABLISHED DIPLOMATIC CUSTOM TAKING ACCOUNT OF JAPAN-SOVIET AND US-SOVIET RELATIONS. END SUMMARY.

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1. DEFECTION OF MIG 25 PILOT SEPTEMBER 6 TO KOKKAIDO AIRPORT

OF HAKODATE HAS DRAWN LIVELY INTEREST OF ALL JAPANESE MEDIA. SEPTEMBER 6 NEWSCASTS GAVE EXTENSIVE COVERAGE FROM HAKODATE FOLLOWED BY REVIEW OF RECENT STEPUP OF SOVIET MILITARY ACTIVITIES AROUND JAPAN. ACCORDING TO NEWS REPORTS, PILOT APPEARED ON JASDF RADARS AT 1:11 PM AT 19,000 FEET, ENTERED THE ADIZ AT 10,000 FEET AND THEN SUDDENLY DISAPPEARED. JASDF SCRAMBLED BUT WAS UNABLE TO LOCATE THE PLANE UNTIL IT APPEARED OVER HAKODATE AIRPORT. PLANE MADE A FORCED LANDING AND OVERRAN THE RUNWAY DAMAGING ITS FRONT NOSE WHEEL IN THE PROCESS. THE SOVIET PILOT EMERGED, FIRED WARNING SHOTS WITH HIS PISTOL AND THEN SURRENDERED TO JAPANESE POLICE SAYING HE HAD LANDED DUE TO SHORTAGE OF FUEL. HE LATER SUBMITTED A WRITTEN REQUEST FOR ASYLUM TO THE POLICE AND ASKED THAT THE PLANE BE COVERED WITH A CANVAS SHROUD (WHICH IT WAS).

2. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS QUOTING NATIONAL POLICE AGENCY SOURCES, BELENKO SAID HE HAD BEEN WANTING TO DEFECT TO THE US FOR TWO YEARS, AND PLANNED TO BRING HIS MIG 25 AS A GIFT. HE SAID HE HAD INTENDED TO LAND AT THE JASDF BASE AT CHITOSE BUT HAD TO MAKE AN EMERGENCY LANDING SINCE HE HAD USED TOO MUCH FUEL IN A LOW ALTITUDE ESCAPE FROM THE USSR. BELENKO IS REPORTED TO BE AT AN UNIDENTIFIED PLACE IN TOKYO PENDING HIS JOURNEY TO THE US.

3. THE SOVIET EMBASSY IS REPORTED TO HAVE DEMANDED ON THE 6TH AN INTERVIEW WITH BELENKO (AND HIS RETURN TO SOVIET HANDS), THE IMMEDIATE HANDING OVER OF THE PLANE, ACCESS TO THE PLANE BY THE SOVIET CONSULATE IN SAPPORO, AND A GUARANTEE OF INVIOALABILITY OF THE PLANE. AT 10:00 PM ON THE 7TH, COUNSELOR DENISOV IS REPORTED TO HAVE LODGED A STRONG PROTEST WITH EASTERN EUROPE FIRST DIVISION DIRECTOR TOGO REGRETTING THAT NO ACCESS HAD BEEN GIVEN TO BELENKO AND HE HAD NOT BEEN TURNED OVER TO SOVIET AUTHORITIES. THE FOREIGN MINISTRY IS REPORTED TO HAVE "LISTENED" TO THE SOVIET SIDE'S DEMAND. SEPTEMBER 7 PAPERS CARRY STORIES FROM THE JDA EXPRESSING INCREASING CONCERN OVER NUMBERS OF UNIDENTIFIED AIRCRAFT (AT LEAST TEN IN FOUR SEPARATE INCIDENTS) APPROACHING JAPAN THE NIGHT OF SEPTEMBER 7 & 8. THIS IS THOUGHT TO BE A SHOW STRENGTH BY THE USSR ACCORDING TO THE PAPERS.

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4. THE PRESS IS STILL SORTING OUT THE POSITIONS OF THE VARIOUS MINISTRIES IN REACTION TO THE EVENT. FOREIGN MINISTER MIYAWAWA HAS CLARIFIED THAT THE GOJ WILL FACILITATE THE ASYLUM REQUEST FOR "HUMANITARIAN REASONS". HIGH FIDELITY SOURCES WERE REPORTED TO BE CONSIDERING THE SETTLEMENT OF THE INCIDENT FROM THE STANDPOINT OF MAINTAINING FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH THE USSR, AND SOURCES CLOSE TO THE FOREIGN MINISTRY HAVE SAID THE PLANE WOULD PROBABLY BE RETURNED "IN CONSIDERATION OF

INTERNATIONAL CUSTOM AS WELL AS JAPAN-SOVIET RELATIONS". HOWEVER, IN PRESS CONFERENCE FOLLOWING CABINET MEETING THE MORNING OF SEPTEMBER 7 FONMIN MIYAZAWA SAID REGARDING THE MIG-25 THAT SINCE THE PLANE WAS INVOLVED IN A VIOLATION OF JAPANESE LAWS, IT WOULD BE NECESSARY TO HOLD IT AS LONG AS IT WAS SUBJECT OF THE INVESTIGATION. THE FONMIN ALSO STATED ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS THAT "AFTER THE INVESTIGATION HAS ENDED IT WILL BECOME A PROBLEM OF DIPLOMATIC NEGOTIATION WHETHER OR NOT WE WILL RETURN THE PLANE AND AT THE PRESENT STAGE IT IS NOT THE TIME".

5. THE JDA HAS EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER THE ADEQUACY OF JAPAN'S AIR DEFENSE, AND THE CAPABILITY OF ITS INTERCEPTOR AIRCRAFT AS A RESULT OF NOT BEING ABLE TO TRACK AND LOCATE THE PLANE. JDA STATE MINISTER SAKATA REPORTED TO THE CABINET SEPTEMBER 7 ON THE MIG-25'S LOW ALTITUDE PENETRATION OF JAPANESE AIR SPACE, AND TOLD THE PRESS THAT PRIME MINISTER MIKI HAD STRESSED THE NEED TO IMPROVE THE DEFENSE WARNING SYSTEM. SAKATA ALSO COMPLAINED THAT IT WAS ONE AND ONE HALF HOURS AFTER THE PENETRATION BEFORE HE RECEIVED THE NEWS, AND SAID HE FELT UNEASY ABOUT THE INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM. SAKATA INDICATED ALL THESE POINTS WILL BE RESTUDIED. THE PRESS IS CARRYING NUMEROUS ARTICLES ABOUT THE AEW AIRCRAFT AND FX FIGHTER PROGRAM CHOICES NOW BEFORE THE GOJ WITH THE GRUMMAN E-2 AND THE F15 RECEIVING PROMINENT DISPLAY AS LEADING CONTENDORS FOR ACQUISITION.

6. JAPANESE EDITORIALS SO FAR HAVE CALLED FOR A "CALM ATTITUDE" TOWARD THE CASE GENERALLY URGING THAT THE GOVERNMENT ALLOW BELENKO TO GO TO THE US AS A POLITICAL REFUGEE, BUT CALLING FOR CAREFUL AND PROMPT NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE US AND THE USSR TO SETTLE THE VARIOUS PROBLEMS INVOLVED. THE ASAHI WARNED THAT SOVIET AUTHORITIES MAY ATTEMPT TO PREVENT THE PILOT WHO POSSESSES MILITARY SECRETS, FROM TAKING REFUGE IN THE US BUT STATED THAT IT IS NATURAL THAT THE JAPANESE AUTHORITIES SHOULD INSPECT THE SOVIET FIGHTER.

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THE MAINICHI EDITORIALIZED THAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD NOT IRRITATE THE SOVIETS UNNECESSARILY BY EXPOSING THE SECRETS OF THE MIG 25. THE SANKEI WARNED THAT THE CASE MAY DEVELOP INTO AN IMPORTANT DIPLOMATIC PROBLEM AND REQUESTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT AVOID UNNECESSARY FRITCTION WITH THE SOVIET SIDE, WHILE TAKING A RESOLUTE ATTITUDE TOWARD THIS CASE WHICH CONSTITUTES A VIOLATION OF JAPAN'S TERRITORIAL SKIES.

7. REGARDING THE CURRENT STATUS OF THE PLANE, THE NATIONAL POLICE AGENCY IS REPORTED TO HAVE ORDERED IT PLACED INSIDE UNDER COVER "TO PREVENT RUSTING". THE USG IS SAID TO HAVE REQUESTED INSPECTION OF THE MIG-25, AS HAVE A NUMBER OF NATO DEFENSE ATTACHES, BUT THE GOVERNMENT IS SAID TO HAVE REFUSED THE REQUESTS. CERTAIN CIRCLES WITHIN THE JDA ARE REPORTED TO BE PRESSING FOR INSPECTION OF THE PLANE FROM THE STANDPOINT OF PREVENTING ANY

VIOLATION OF JAPAN'S TERRITORIAL SKY IN THE FUTURE NOTING THAT
IT IS PERMISSABLE UNDER INTERNATIONAL PRACTICE TO CHECK AN
INTRUDER PLANE. ANOTHER GOVERNMENT VIEW REPORTED IS THAT THE
MIG-25 WILL IMPEDE THE SAFE OPERATION OF CIVIL PLANES AT THE
HAKODATE AIRPORT AND SHOULD BE "TRANSFERRED AFTER BEING DISMANTLED
IMMEDIATELY".
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